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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION TEACHING IN ITS RELATION TO THE CONSERVATION OF HEALTH

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The National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness has received many inquiries for data regarding educational efforts looking toward prevention of disease, and prevention of total or partial blindness in particular, as put forth by the extension departments of the various universities and colleges throughout the United States. Realizing that nearly two hundred schools and colleges have adopted extension courses, and that they are thus reaching hundreds of thousands of persons and exercising a tremendous influence in educating the public in these matters, the Committee has made a study of their methods with special reference to its own co-operation with these extension departments. Out of this study has come this account of the university extension movement of today as it manifests itself particularly in promotion of public health.

Prior to 1890 little consideration was given to the question of extension teaching. The American Lyceum, founded in 1831, had carried out some work of this nature, and in 1874 the establishment of the Chautauqua idea offered wide fields for action; but it was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that the forming of university extension centers in the United States began widely to influence the public. In 1890 a committee of representative colleges and universities of New York urged the Regents to introduce extension teaching as a part of the state system. In the same year the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching was organized in Philadelphia.

Perhaps the minds that conceived this method of giving the educational advantages of the college curriculum to thousands who

could not otherwise have been reached beheld in a vision something of the far-reaching influence of such a movement, but surely it has outrun even their greatest hopes of achievement.

As arranged in the curricula of the present day, university extension teaching is intended to reach five classes of people: (1) those who have not had college training and have little hope of future opportunity to attend the regular academic course; (2) those who have had some college work, but have been obliged to drop out before completing the course; (3) those who hope to go to college in time, and desire to fit themselves to accomplish the prescribed work within the shortest limits of actual attendance; (4) those who have had the benefit of college training, but desire to increase their efficiency by continued intensive work; (5) busy people who like study as a recreation.

Extension teaching falls into five general classes of procedure: (1) the providing for extension teaching within the radius of the university, arranging it at such hours that students occupied during the working-day may avail themselves of the opportunity offered; (2) the forming of extension classes throughout the state in which courses are offered at a nominal fee, trained university professors constituting a faculty; (3) the sending out of material from the university center as desired by various localities; (4) the sending out from the university center a corps of trained men and women as lecturers and demonstrators chiefly in connection with agricultural work; (5) correspondence courses.

It must be understood in the following exposition that no college or university doing extension work limits its usefulness to any one of these methods; many combine several, and make every effort to meet the demands for extension teaching in whatever way the needs are best satisfied. The examples given have been selected because they present courses of work along the lines indicated and are typical of various sections of the country.

The first method is pursued chiefly by large colleges and universities, particularly in the eastern states. The reason for the selection of this type is that the university believes that it can obtain the best results where it is possible to use all its resources at first hand. This is particularly noteworthy in the case of chemical,

biological, and psychological laboratories and technical libraries. Consideration is also given to the fact that in well-populated states colleges and other educational facilities abound; hence the need of extension centers beyond the college radius does not arise.

Columbia University forms an excellent example of this type of extension work. Including its department of Teachers College, it offers to its extension students 470 courses covering a vast range of interest. Of these, 49, or practically 10 per cent, deal with subjects relating to personal or community health; for example:

Hygiene 75.—Sanitary science. Lectures and demonstrations; 2 points.

This course includes a general survey of the fundamental principles of sanitary science and disease prevention, and their application to water supply, milk, general food supply, disposal of sewage and garbage; air supply; the problems of tenement and factory sanitation, and the spread and control of contagious diseases. Brief attention will also be given to the problem of rural hygiene, the preventive factors in constitutional disease, personal hygiene, and the social and economic aspects of health problems; the functions and methods of the Board of Health will be discussed and the use of vital and sanitary statistics.¹

For the year 1916-17 no less than 1,455 students took advantage of these health courses. These students represent a wide range of states and communities, and many will doubtless return to their home centers to carry on their work. The influence of nearly fifteen hundred students equipped to meet the special health problems of their environment cannot fail to have widespread results.

The second method of extension teaching is in use largely in the middle and western states, where it seems peculiarly fitted to the needs of wide areas. Wherever a number of people interested in a subject can be gathered together, the university makes every effort to arrange a center.

In 1915-16 Ohio University had 77 such centers, with a registration of 1,459 students. Two lectures were given each week of the course during a term of fifteen weeks, and a credit of two semester hours was allowed for satisfactory work. A registration fee of \$5.00 was required. The center furnished the place of meeting,

¹ *Teachers College Bulletin*, 1916-17, p. 25.

including light and heat, and, in cases of considerable distance from a railroad, the means of transportation. The university arranged for the instructor and for a small traveling library of the books necessary for the course. The work was the same as that given in the regular classes of the university.

For the year 1916-17, the university offered 42 courses, 3 of these, or about 7 per cent, dealing with sanitation and the health problems of home economics. Classes will be formed in subjects not scheduled, provided fifteen students register.

The third method is employed in various sections of the country, but is found particularly adaptable where, as in the preceding method, large areas are to be covered. It has the advantage of reaching a far greater number of people, but is not so well suited to intensive personal achievement.

In this type co-operation is requested between the university and all educational and civic activities in the state. The university represents the supply center, and the entire state creates the demand. The school, society, class, or other organization requests to be placed on a circuit arranged by the university. Material is sent out from the university as a center to all organizations interested. The University of California, at Berkeley, exemplifies this method of work in the activities of its Bureau of Visual Instruction. This bureau circulates three types of material; stereopticon slides, motion-picture films, and exhibits. The first two are sent out only on requisition, and are returned to the university after each showing. In the current year about one hundred centers throughout the state are making use of these.

The exhibits, called traveling exhibits, are kept constantly on the road, being studied weekly by from 350 to 400 pupils. In addition, the exhibits are called to the attention of the community at large, and an invitation to inspect them is issued. Seventy-two centers are using such exhibits.

These exhibits may be prepared on any subject of educational value that meets with the approval of the Bureau. The object is to give the large percentage of those who never reach the university some conception of the world's industries and products, and likewise any work of a sociological nature that may be made the subject

of an exhibit to give an idea of what is being done to alleviate suffering, poverty, etc. Naturally, many of these touch upon health problems. A few such exhibits, taken at random, include the manufacture of bread covering all the details to the finished product, steps in the manufacture of optical lenses from rough glass, application of first aid, the manufacture of automobile tires, etc. The Bureau is including in the current year a special exhibit on the causes and prevention of blindness and is circulating throughout the state a set of slides prepared by the National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness.

The fourth type of extension teaching is used largely by agricultural colleges, particularly in the southern states. The work is chiefly in rural communities, and the needs of these differ so widely from those of an urban population that it has been found advisable to adopt an entirely new scheme of extension teaching.

The general plan is to take the county as a unit and place in each of these divisions a county agent, or farm adviser, to work with the local organization. Many colleges add to this staff of agents a woman home demonstrator for each county to take charge of the home economics. She organizes the community into clubs for the special study of problems relating to the home; she visits the clubs periodically and gives demonstrations on canning, sewing, cooking, first aid, sanitation, personal and community hygiene, etc.

The state agricultural college of Virginia is furnishing programs for 1,150 community or civic leagues. The program planned for February and March, 1917, worked out in co-operation with the board of health, covered the general subject of "Health of the Home and Community." In February the 25 county agents discussed home sanitation, and in March, personal hygiene.

The state agricultural college of Alabama has 60 white farm demonstrating agents, 12 negro farm demonstrating agents, and 25 women county agents. Thus one college alone is sending out 97 trained demonstrators and lecturers to get personally in touch with general and individual rural questions and carry university training to the very doors of those unable to take advantage of it at its source. Special attention is paid to community health

problems, and much has been and is being done to decrease and prevent malaria and typhoid fever.

The fifth type of extension teaching needs only a word of explanation. It is designed primarily to meet the needs of two classes of people: first, those whose work is of such a nature that attendance at classes held at any regular time or place is impossible; second, those who desire personal instruction by means of written or printed communications for various reasons of convenience. Thus the University of Chicago in its extension work permits a correspondence course to be taken where there are conflicts of hours in the courses selected. This method of instruction was employed in correspondence schools long before it became a part of university extension work, and many universities now combine it with other methods.

Several colleges are carrying out interesting lines of work adaptable to almost any college or university program. It may not be amiss to cite a few cases.

The University of North Carolina furnishes a unique example of extension teaching in its health conservation. The postgraduate department of the Medical School gives, in co-operation with the board of health, courses in medicine for practicing physicians in the home towns of the physicians. These courses consist of lectures and clinics in some special phase of medicine under the direction of an acknowledged expert in that field brought from one of the centers of scientific progress. He goes to the doctors practicing at home, instead of having one or two go to him for a week or so of clinical work.

In the summer of 1916, a group of towns was selected reasonably close together, with satisfactory train schedules. A class of physicians, varying from 8 to 20 in number, was formed in each from the town itself and the surrounding country. A one-hour lecture was given to the group in town A on Monday morning, and a two-hour clinic held that afternoon. The same plan was followed in town B on Tuesday, town C on Wednesday, and so on through the week, the lecturer returning to town A the following Monday. By this method the time and energy of both lecturer and class were conserved. Two such courses were given, both in

pediatrics: one, a course of 16 weeks, in the eastern part of the state, conducted by Dr. Lewis Webb Hill, of Harvard University; the second, a course of 12 weeks, in the western part of the state, conducted by Dr. Jesse R. Gerstley, of Northwestern University. About ninety physicians took advantage of each course; the tuition fee amounted to about \$30.00. A small laboratory was maintained in connection with each clinic, a formal record of attendance was kept at the class meetings, and an examination was given at the close of the course.

The greatest difficulty encountered was in getting clinical material. It is believed that this can be obviated in the future by giving more attention to the subject at the outset of the course, and by making definite arrangements with the physicians to provide this material as part of their regular class work.

It is suggested that courses of shorter length could be instituted on such subjects as require special brief treatment, wherein a group of possibly two or three towns would be interested.

Yale University, although it has no established extension work, conducted in 1916-17, through the newly established Department of Health, a survey of the health and sanitation of the city of New Haven.

The School of Applied Social Science of the Western Reserve University has arranged for a division of municipal administration and public service, including a department of family welfare and social service. It offers a special course for public health nurses.

Bryn Mawr made a special study of occupational diseases in two of the leading hospitals in Philadelphia, with the result that a clinic for occupational diseases was established in one of them. Nurses and social workers in the city are evidencing particular interest in this work.

The State University of Iowa has a department of child-welfare, one of its chief objects being to arrange exhibits for the use of women's clubs, churches, and other social agencies.

The state agricultural college of North Dakota includes a trained nurse on its staff of university extension workers.

The College of the City of New York is being congratulated on a law, lately passed by the legislature, by which it is able to open

its doors to every mature resident of New York City who wishes to avail himself of theoretical and practical instruction along advanced collegiate lines, without necessarily passing formal preliminary examinations. Over twenty-five hundred students have enrolled. The Board of Trustees is prepared to offer to the public any educational advantage it deems wise. The new work of the college is to meet the educational demands of all mature residents, and also to give training for public service.

To meet adequately conditions arising from extension teaching, colleges and universities have much to learn. In the college proper the faculty soon realized the necessity for safeguarding the health of the student, not only by providing for medical and hospital care in cases of actual illness, but by preventive measures such as physical examinations and training, regular lectures on hygiene and kindred subjects. In extension work the problem was less tangible; the people reached were not, in the majority of cases, of college age and residence, and hence could not be subjected to college rules. The present-day emphasis on high health standards had not made its impression on the public. As soon as the demand for a better understanding of health measures manifested itself colleges doing extension work began to consider the possibility of meeting it. One of the first lessons learned by the university was that unnecessary duplication is waste, and efforts were immediately put forth to ascertain systematically the resources already at hand for the asking. This investigation brought to the fore, not only the willingness to co-operate on the part of those organizations well known to the public, but likewise the interest of hitherto unsuspected forces.

It is impossible to attempt to list all the organizations through which the colleges are co-operating to carry on extension work. For purposes of suggestion a few may be mentioned: the state and local boards of health, Red Cross societies, nurses' associations, anti-tubercular agencies, national, state, and city committees on child-welfare, the National Education Association, national labor associations, national and state committees for the prevention of blindness, charity organizations, social and welfare associations, civic leagues, village improvement societies, women's clubs, parent-

teachers' associations, etc. Foundations such as the Rockefeller and Russell Sage, having devoted intensive study to particular lines, are essentially qualified to co-operate.

It is interesting to note that, particularly in the work of those colleges and universities dealing with rural communities, health problems are assuming new aspects; requests for instruction are no longer limited to the prevention or cure of disease in the animal and vegetable life of the farm. Community and civic betterment are demanding at least equal attention.

If, in the first few years of this new undertaking, the "aristocracy of scholarship" looked somewhat askance at the plebeian zeal of those reaching out eagerly for the advantage of college training, and if, in response to that very eagerness and lack of discrimination, second-rate material was offered to extension classes, the patient influence of time has mellowed the former attitude, and the very advance made by the work has educated the understanding public to demand and receive the best that can be obtained. Surely extension teaching, reaching as it does a class of people often more eager to take full advantage than the average regular college student, is its own excuse for being.

Of course it is to be regretted that the university extension student cannot always enjoy the advantages of the campus with its social and ethical influences. The saying is attributed to Dr. Eliot that just to lean up against the walls of Harvard for four years is, in itself, a liberal education; but so much is now being offered to the extension student that, even without the prop of material walls, he may be liberally educated and, in many instances, may look upon one of the great universities of the world as his Alma Mater.

The National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness has to offer for co-operation in extension teaching the following:

1. Literature giving the results of intensive studies on:
 - a) General causes of blindness.
 - b) Ophthalmia neonatorum (babies' sore eyes).
 - c) Midwives.
 - d) Wood alcohol.
 - e) Trachoma.

- f)* Industrial eye accidents.
- g)* Motion pictures and eyestrain.
- h)* Saving the sight of school children.
- 2. Exhibits and slides to illustrate the foregoing.
- 3. Lecturers to give talks on various phases of the subject of prevention of blindness.
- 4. Outline lectures for general use.
- 5. The energy and resources of the Committee in undertaking new studies to prevent the loss of that most precious of the senses—the sight.